

## Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 MANAMA 00723 012019Z  
ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY MANAMA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4436

S E C R E T MANAMA 723

EXDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT PARA 2.)

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: MORG, MASS, PFOR, BA  
SUBJECT: MIDEASTFOR AND OUR BROADER RELATIONS WITH BDF

1. SUMMARY: AT SOME POINT IN MIDEASTFOR TALKS WE PROBABLY WILL HAVE TO ADDRESS QUESTION OF WHAT ARMS WOULD WE BE WILLING TO SELL BAHRAIN. FROM HERE IT SEEMS AS UNLIKELY AS IT WOULD BE UNWISE TO SELL VERY SOPHISTICATED WEAPONRY, SUCH AS F-5 AIRCRAFT, TO GOB. AND, HOPEFULLY, NUMBER OF INFLUENTIAL MINISTERS WILL CONTINUE TO OPPOSE DEFENSE MINISTER'S DESIRE FOR SUCH WEAPONS. UNSOPHISTICATED WEAPONS ARE ANOTHER MATTER, PARTICULARLY SINCE WE HAVE AGREED IN PRINCIPLE TO ASSIST IN BDF MODERNIZATION. WHILE QUESTION HAS YET TO ARISE IN RECENT ROUND OF MIDEASTFOR TALKS, IT PROBABLY WILL DO SO, AND WE OUGHT TO BE PREPARED TO RESPOND. ALSO, THERE ARE OTHER, MINOR ASPECTS OF OUR MILITARY RELATIONSHIP WHICH NEED ATTENTION IF THEY ARE NOT TO BECOME IRRITANTS IN OUR BROADER RELATIONS HERE. END SUMMARY.

2. QUESTION OF SECURITY ASSISTANCE HAS YET TO RAISE ITS TROUBLESOME HEAD IN CURRENT ROUND OF MIDEASTFOR TALKS BUT IT PROBABLY WILL DO SO AT SOME POINT. WE HOPE THAT GOB

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MINISTERS WHO ARE OPPOSED TO FANCY, EXPENSIVE WEAPONS WILL CONTINUE AND BE SUCCESSFUL IN THEIR OPPOSITION. PUBLIC POSITIONS OF OUR ADMINISTRATION ARM SALES AND SAUDI OPPOSITION TO FANCY ARMS IN BAHRAIN (IF GOB AWARE OF SAUDI VIEW), PERHAPS HAVE HELPED RESTRAIN THOSE HERE WHO DO WANT SOPHISTICATED WEAPONRY. GIVEN OUR PUBLIC POSITIONS ON ARMS SALES AND CONTINUING LOCAL AND SAUDI OPPOSITION TO SOPHISTICATED WEAPONRY, WE ARE IN GOOD

POSITION TO AVOID OR TO REFUSE SUCH REQUESTS AND VERY PROBABLY TO DO SO WITHOUT SERIOUS HARM TO OUR OTHER INTERESTS HERE, INCLUDING MIDEASTFOR.

3. PROBLEM, HOWEVER, IS WHAT WE ARE PREPARED TO RESPOND TO MORE REASONABLE REQUESTS FOR UNSOPHISTICATED WEAPONS SUCH AS HELICOPTERS, SMALL NAVAL CRAFT, AA GUNS, AVIATION TRAINING, AND PERHAPS MILITARY CONSTRUCTION ADVICE. WE HAVE STUDIED BDF NEEDS AND IN THE CASE OF HELICOPTERS HAVE RECOMMENDED THAT THEY PURCHASE SOME -- THOUGH WE HAVE YET FORMALLY TO AGREE TO SELL. ALSO, WE HAVE SAID ON THE RECORD TO GOB THAT IN CONTEXT OUR OVERALL RELATIONSHIP, INCLUDING GOB'S RESPONSIVENESS TO U.S. INTERESTS, WE WOULD BE PREPARED TO ASSIST IN ITS EFFORTS TO MODERNIZE BDF. WE WILL NEED TO KNOW SOON WITHIN USG WHAT WE ARE AND ARE NOT PREPARED TO DO IN ASSISTING IN BDF MODERNIZATION. BECAUSE WE WILL NOT BE FORTHCOMING ON REQUESTS FOR SOPHISTICATED EQUIPMENT, WE OUGHT TO HAVE SOME ANSWERS IN HAND WHEN REQUESTS FOR UNSOPHISTICATED EQUIPMENT ARE MADE.

4. MEANWHILE, THERE ARE MINOR ISSUES IN OUR MILITARY RELATIONSHIP WHICH NEED ATTENTION IF THEY ARE NOT TO BECOME IRRITANTS IN OUR BROADER RELATIONS. CASE IN POINT IS 1500 66MM ROCKETS ON WHICH DELIVERY WAS GREATLY DELAYED. LAST OCTOBER THEN DEPSECYDEF CLEMENTS PROMISED TO SPEED THINGS UP. 300 ROCKETS ARRIVED FEB. 12 BUT, AS DEPT AWARE FROM CDRDARCOM ALEX VA MESSAGE 231913Z MAR, REMAINING 1200 MAY NOT BE DELIVERED UNTIL AUGUST. HARDLY A SPEED-UP. ACTION REQUESTED: WOULD DEPT.

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PLEASE REQUEST OF DOD MUCH EARLIER DELIVERY PER CLEMENTS OCT 76 COMMITMENT TO HEIR APPARENT/DEFENSE MINISTER.

5. COMMENT: BEYOND IMMEDIATE NEED TO PREPARE OURSELVES TO RESPOND TO ARMS REQUESTS WHICH MAY COME UP IN MIDEASTFOR TALKS, AND TO HANDLE FEW EXISTING CASES MORE EFFECTIVELY, WE ARE CONCERNED ABOUT OUR LONGER-TERM RELATIONS WITH BDF. AS DEPT AWARE, BDF HEIRARCHY HAS FOR SOME YEARS VIEWED USG GENERALLY AND THIS EMBASSY SPECIFICALLY AS BEING UNRESPONSIVE AND UNSYMPATHETIC TO ITS CONCERNS AND REQUESTS. THIS BDF INTERPRETATION OF THINGS HAS BEEN RESONABLY ACCURATE SINCE THE USG HAS BEEN UNSYMPATHETIC, ON POLICY GROUNDS, TO MOST MAJOR PROCUREMENT REQUESTS -- OR MORE LITERALLY TO "INFORMAL" QUERIES -- OVER THE PAST FOUR YEARS. EVEN ON ITEMS WHERE WE HAVE BEEN RESPONSIVE (AS WITH THE 66 MM ROCKETS), THE HISTORY OF DELIVERY SNAFFUS, POOR COORDINATION WITHIN USG, ETC., HAS LENT FURTHER CREDENCE TO THE BDF SUSPICION THAT THE USG DOES NOT SUPPORT ITS EXPANSION AND MODERNIZATION. THE SENIOR OFFICERS OF THE BDF, INCLUDING THE HEIR APPARENT, MAY READ MORE INTO THESE

COORDINATION PROBLEMS THAN IS WARRANTED. WHILE IT IS BASICALLY THE CASE THAT THE USG IS UNSYMPATHETIC TO THEIR GRANDIOSE EXPANSION AND MODERNIZATION PLANS, THEY MAY, THROUGH LACK OF SOPHISTICATION, ATTRIBUTE OR CONFUSE USG ATTITUDES REGARDING THE BDF AS REFLECTING USG VIEWS OF BAHRAIN AND OF THEM PERSONALLY. MOST IMPORTANTLY IN THE CASE OF THE HEIR APPARENT, BUT ALSO, IN THE LONG RUN, IN THE CASE OF THE CHIEF OF STAFF AND OTHER YOUNG RULING FAMILY MEMBERS IN THE BDF, SUCH ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT THE USG WOULD PROVE DAMAGING IN OUR RATIONS WITH NEXT GENERATION OF BAHRAINI LEADERS. SOLUTION TO THIS PROBLEM, IN OUR VIEW, IS TO ASSURE THAT HOWEVER LITTLE WE MAY DO FOR BDF, WE DO IT AS SPEEDILY AND AS FREE OF HANGUPS AS POSSIBLE.  
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